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C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 000142

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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, SA/PB, S/CT,
EUR/RPM

STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG

NSC FOR AHARRIMAN

OSD FOR KIMMITT

CENTCOM FOR CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD, JICCENT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/11/2017

TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER ASEC MARR AF

SUBJECT: PAG: MUSA QALA TEST BEGINS BUT NEXT STEPS DEFERRED

REF: 06 KABUL 5951

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald Neumann for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) At the January 11 PAG, MOI reported that 40 ANAP who had been recruited from Musa Qala (MQ) had been deployed back to the district, which satisfied Test 1 agreed to by the PAG on December 21 (reftel). An additional 20 ANAP are in training in Lashkar Gah and will be deployed to MQ soon.

¶2. (C) The PAG agreed to defer Test 2 (ANP/ANA/ISAF tests the right to transit the town of MQ and the surrounding 5KM zone with a force from outside MQ, a few days after Test 1). This followed MOI's report of new intelligence gathered by a recent MOI field assessment that indicated the Taliban in MQ may be local part-time fighters not affiliated with the hard core Taliban leadership and central command. According to MOI, many are not "genuine Taliban" but people angry at former local corrupt officials. MOI argued that aggressive testing might make these locals less amenable to central government authority. It is therefore necessary to prepare adequately before conducting Test 2. MOI said it was necessary to give adequate warning that outside forces would be transiting, that consultations with Helmand Governor Wafa need to take place first, and more intel is needed on what the enemy consisted of. Both MOD and NDS agreed that the local MQ elders are not hard core Taliban, but NDS Director Saleh noted that intelligence indicated there was also a less benign Taliban presence in the town. MOI reported that Governor Wafa had yet to meet with the elders and that they planned to facilitate his transportation to MQ for such a meeting. ISAF agreed with idea of deferring Test 2, but emphasized that we were not abandoning the idea of testing, simply validating the intel.

¶3. (C) NSA Rassoul underlined that the tests were not intended as a threat or demonstration of force. The GOA or the Governor would inform the elders first that outside forces would be transiting. CSTC-A Commanding General Durbin briefed that a meeting had been scheduled on January 13 in Lashkar Gah between the MOD, MOI and Governor Wafa, with CSTC-A support. This meeting would include discussion of the

Governor's plans to move forward with Tests 2 and 3. Based on the results of this meeting, it should be possible to set a date for Test 2 and an estimated date for Test 3. (Note: Embassy POLMILOff traveled with the delegation to Helmand, but the meeting did not take place, because Governor Wafa was ill and therefore did not attend the security shura. However, the British PRT Political Advisor told POLMILOff that Wafa plans to meet the elders soon and that provincial Police Chief Nabi Jan plans to travel to Musa Qala with regular ANP for a meeting with elders probably next week. End note.)

¶4. (C) NSA Rassoul reiterated that the tests were not a demonstration of force and that the GOA or the Governor would inform the elders first that outside forces would be transiting. MG Durbin said that Test 2 would be a way to test whether the new intel was valid or not. If we laid the groundwork and coordinated, ANSF/ISAF should be able to transit easily. A/DCM highlighted the importance of Test 3, which would test the possibility of a normal relationship between the central government and the local authority. NSA Rassoul agreed that it was important to assert government authority in order to help and provide services to the people.

¶5. (C) NSA Rassoul summed up that the PAG had agreed to defer Test 2, that MOD and MOI would consult with the Governor, that more intel was needed, and that the next PAG would take up the issue again.

NEUMANN